



Educators' Guide to Ally Week

Learn how educators can participate in Ally Week
and support students' efforts.



Introduction

GLSEN and LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) students and their Allies across the country thank you for taking the time to learn more about Ally Week and how educators can participate. Ally Week helps to identify, support and celebrate Allies who take a stand against anti-LGBT language, bullying and harassment in America's schools.

From GLSEN's 2011 National School Climate Survey, we know that schools nationwide are hostile environments for a distressing number of LGBT students – almost all of whom commonly hear homophobic remarks and face verbal and physical harassment and even physical assault because of their sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.

During the 2010-2011 School Year:

- 84.9% of LGBT students heard "gay" used in a negative way (e.g., "that's so gay") and 71.3% heard homophobic remarks (e.g., "dyke" or "faggot") frequently or often at school.
- 81.9% of LGBT students reported being verbally harassed, 38.3% reported being physically harassed and 18.3% reported being physically assaulted at school in the past year because of their sexual orientation.
- 63.9% of LGBT students reported being verbally harassed, 27.1% reported being physically harassed and 12.4% reported being physically assaulted at school in the past year because of their gender expression.

In addition, we know that many LGBT students miss classes or entire days of school rather than face a hostile environment.

During the same school year:

- Nearly one third of LGBT students (29.8%) reported skipping a class at least once and 31.8% missed at least one entire day of school in the past month because of safety concerns.
- Students with greater numbers of supportive staff had a greater sense of being a part of their school community than other students.

School-based victimization denies students their rights to an education. Ally Week serves to bring these issues to light, with particular attention on the actions that Allies can take to combat anti-LGBT name-calling, bullying and harassment in schools. Participating in Ally Week is an effective way for educators to show their support for all students, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression. Continue reading through this guide to learn how you can participate in Ally Week.

What is an Ally?

An ally is an individual who speaks out and stands up for a person or group that is targeted and/or discriminated against. An ally works to end oppression by supporting and advocating for people who are stigmatized, or treated unfairly because of who they are. The LGBT community commonly refers to Allies as people who do not identify as LGBT students, but really anyone can be an ally. A white gay male student can be an ally for a female transgender identifying student of color. A lesbian identified teacher can be an ally for her students. The common link is that all allies regardless of identity support the community by rallying against the bullying and harassment LGBT youth face in school. Allies should be celebrated for their contribution to making schools safe for LGBT students.

What is Ally Week?

During Ally Week, student organizers plan events and actions to identify, support and celebrate Allies, with particular attention to those Allies who stand up against anti-LGBT name-calling, bullying and harassment in schools.

This year, GLSEN and students across the country, often as members of Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs) or similar student clubs, will celebrate Ally Week on **October 21-25**. Student leaders will be planning various events appropriate to their school communities, including ally trainings, discussion groups, rallies or other community projects. Many students will encourage their peers and school staff to sign the Ally Pledge.

What Happens During Ally Week?

During Ally Week, student leaders may organize several activities and actions to celebrate Allies to LGBT students. You can support Ally Week and your students' efforts by offering to help with these activities.

Pledges: Student organizers may ask their peers to sign a pledge stating:

I believe all students, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression, deserve to feel safe and supported.

That means I pledge to:

- *Not use anti-LGBT language and slurs;*
- *Intervene, if I safely can, in situations where other students are being harassed;*
- *Support efforts to end bullying and harassment.*

Activities: Students may organize several different types of Ally Week actions or events. These may include:

- Daily Announcements
- Lunchtime Discussions
- Film Screenings
- Ally 101 Workshops
- Information Tables
- Presentations to Students
- GSA Collaborations with other Student Clubs
- Presentations to Staff
- Display Cases

Ally Week Participation for Educators

Ally Week Pledges

Take the Ally Week Pledge.

Support your students' Ally Week efforts by taking the pledge. You can take the pledge in a public forum such as the classroom, lunchroom or an assembly to show students that they too can be an ally to LGBT students. Encourage students to take the pledge. Use your class time and have pledge forms available for students.

Ask other School Staff to Take the Pledge.

You can spread the word about Ally Week and the importance of being an ally to other school staff. Print out the Ally Week Educator Pledge Sheet and have your colleagues take the pledge. You can do this one-on-one or during a staff meeting.

Ally Week Actions

Ally Week is a student-led action, but you can still be involved. As an educator, you have the opportunity to help students gauge the appropriate actions for Ally Week in the context of your school community. Having knowledge of the school's policies and procedures, you can offer suggestions on how students can develop effective Ally Week activities. You can also help students negotiate with administrators and other students who may oppose Ally Week.

Intervene if Ally Week participants are called names, bullied or harassed

During Ally Week, students will be interacting with their peers and asking them to take the Ally Week Pledge. In some instances, students' peers could respond with name-calling and bullying. You can use these as teachable moments to model support for LGBT students and Allies by intervening and insisting that your school be a safe space for ALL. For tips on how to intervene during anti-LGBT behavior, check out GLSEN's [Think B4 You Speak Guide](#).

Be a Visible Ally to LGBT students

By being an Ally you can help make LGBT students feel safe and included in school. One simple way you can be an ally is to create a safe and inclusive space in your classroom or office. To learn how to be an ally to LGBT students, read GLSEN's [Safe Space Kit](#). The Safe Space Kit outlines ways to show visible support for LGBT students, educate about anti-LGBT bias and advocate for inclusive changes in your school.

Support students' Ally Week efforts

If you are not already involved, attend your school's GSA meetings leading up to Ally Week. Offer to take on tasks and help the students with their organizing efforts. Work with other educators to secure space for students to display Ally Week information. Volunteer to staff an information table and answer students' questions about Ally Week. Work with students and administrators to help students secure the time and space for an auditorium or staff presentation.

Talk about Ally behavior on sports teams.

[Changing The Game](#) -the GLSEN Sports Project provides guidance on how coaches can help their players bring their 'A' game and speaking up to let others know that name-calling, taunting, bullying or hazing are not ok on your team or in your school. Being a leader and standing up for what you believe is right is what an ally does. Visit the [Changing the Game Resources](#) page to utilize GLSEN's tools for educators.



Class Discussions

Dedicate some class time during Ally Week to discuss anti-LGBT bias in schools and the need for Allies. Engage your students in discussion using the following questions.

- Describe any anti-LGBT name-calling, bullying or harassment you have witnessed in our school?
- How safe do you think our school is for LGBT students? How do you know?
- Why do you think it's important to be an ally to LGBT students?
- Who can be an Ally?
- What are some examples of things people can do to demonstrate being an Ally in our school?

Use GLSEN's [National School Climate Survey](#) to share some statistics about the effects of name-calling, bullying and harassment based on actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.

Staff Presentation

As an educator, you have the unique opportunity to engage other school staff. If possible, invite a student leader to make a presentation on the importance of supporting LGBT students. Provide your colleagues with the Educators' Guide to Ally Week, information about GLSEN's Safe Space Kit and discuss with them the need for Allies in the school. Use the "Engage School Staff" section of the [Safe Space Kit](#) for more details on staff presentations.

Film Screening

During Ally Week you can engage students in discussions about the importance of being Allies to LGBT students by screening one or more of the films listed below.

<u><i>Coming Out</i></u>	A short documentary about the impact of heterosexism and homophobia on the identities of LGBT youth. Produced by both LGBT youth and their allies.
<u><i>No Dumb Questions</i></u>	A funny and touching documentary profiling three sisters, ages 6, 9 and 11, struggling to understand why and how their Uncle Bill is becoming a woman.
<u><i>One of Them</i></u>	This discussion-starter drama for high school students explores bullying, name-calling, and violence in school. Jamie is shocked when she and her best friend become victims of homophobic name-calling. But she must face up to her own reactions as she realizes that her friend is "one of them."
<u><i>Out in the Silence:</i></u>	Out in the Silence captures the remarkable chain of events that unfold when the announcement of filmmaker Joe Wilson's wedding to another man ignites a firestorm of controversy in his small Pennsylvania hometown.
<u><i>Straightlaced</i></u>	From girls confronting popular messages about culture and body image to boys who are sexually active just to prove they aren't gay, the students in Straightlaced illustrate the toll that deeply held stereotypes and rigid gender policing have on all of our lives.



Ally Week Resources

[Student Guide](#)

[Ally Week Information and Planning Tips](#)

[Ally Week Merchandise](#)

[GLSEN Educator Forum](#)

Other Important Resources

[GLSEN's Safe Space Kit, Guide to Being an Ally](#)

A guide to learn how you can support LGBT students, teach about anti-LGBT bias and advocate for changes in your school.

[GLSEN.org/research](#)

The 2011 National School Climate Survey, the most comprehensive report ever on the experiences of LGBT students, shows that nearly 8 out of 10 LGBT students experienced harassment at school in the previous year. Find more research statistics at [GLSEN Research](#).

[GLSEN Lessons](#)

Find grade appropriate lessons to teach about LGBT and bullying issues in the classroom.

[Changing the Game: The GLSEN Sports Project](#)

The Sports Project's mission is to assist K-12 schools in creating and maintaining an athletic and physical education climate that is based on the core principles of respect, safety and equal access for all, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression.